

Price Creek Watershed Project Holds Successful “Kickoff”

In September, landowners and operators in the Price Creek watershed were invited to attend a project “kickoff” event.

Aaron Pickens, coordinator of the project, spoke to a group of over 35 landowners, operators, and project partners about the water quality issues in Price Creek, the goals of project over the next three years, planned information and education efforts, as well as cost-share opportunities available to landowners to install conservation practices.

To give farmers and owners of land within the watershed an idea of how good land management practices can effect land over time, Dr. Dick Schultz, Professor of Natural Resources Ecology and Management at

Iowa State University, shared pictures and maps of the restoration efforts on Bear Creek in Story County. As with Price Creek, Bear Creek suffered from poor conservation management, leading to significant erosion and other water quality issues. To control erosion and restore the creeks health, ISU scientists worked with landowners to install a vegetative buffer system to control and filter runoff in the watershed. After only four years of operating with the system, Bear Creek looked significantly healthier than it did in the past 30 years.

“It doesn’t take a major change in landscape to make changes in water quality,” explained Schultz.

Pickens stressed the implemen-

tation of buffers and other conservation practices is on voluntary approach but indicated that the success of the project is ultimately up to landowners in the watershed.

Thank you to all who attended the event!



Landowners and farm operators listen intently as conservation professionals discuss the goals and objectives of the Price Creek Watershed Project at the September 10th kickoff

Price Creek Watershed Project

A joint project of the Iowa and Benton County Soil & Water Conservation Districts

Fast Facts:

- Did you know that Price Creek has experienced E Coli Bacteria levels that are 22 times higher than EPA standards for primary contact waters (i.e. swimming)?
- Did you know that an estimated 13,500 tons of sediment make it into Price Creek each year? That is over 800 dump truck loads!
- Did you know that all open feedlots regardless of size are required by EPA to remove all settleable solids from manure prior to discharge into a stream, waterway, or other “water of the state?”

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EQIP Sign-up Deadline Fast Approaching

By: Aaron Pickens, project coordinator

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is currently taking applications for cost-share assistance through their Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Applications are accepted year round however, November 30th will be the deadline for accepting applications for the 2008 year.

The Price Creek Watershed Projects utilizes EQIP funds to provide a portion of the cost share associated with the installation of structural or management based conservation practices.

If you are a landowner or farm operator that is even remotely interested in completing conservation work next year, it is important that you are signed up

by November 30th. Not know for sure what you want to do? No problem... Signing an application does not commit you to anything, it simply gets your “name in the hat” and lets us know that you are interested. We will then work with you one-on-one to develop a plan and estimate for your project. Later this winter, applications will be ranked on a points system based on the project and environmental benefit. Those applicants who rank the highest will be asked if they would like to proceed with their project.

Most common practices in the Price Creek Watershed are:

- **Sediment and Erosion Control**—terraces, sediment basins, ponds, grade stabilization structures, grassed waterways, stream bank

stabilization, filter strips, no-till incentive

- **Livestock Management**— Fencing, alternative watering sources, ponds, seeding, heavy use area protection, use exclusion incentive
- **Nutrient/Manure Management**— Roofed systems, solids settling basins, winter feeding stations, manure stacking and storing facilities, diversions and gutters to manage clean water, grass filter strips, nutrient management incentive

For a complete list of practices, current cost share rates, or to sign-up contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District.

Nutrient and Manure Management Workshop to be Held December 4th

The Price Creek Watershed Project will be hosting a nutrient and manure management workshop on December 4th, 2007. The workshop will be held from 6:00-9:00 PM at the Amana RV Park’s Morton Building in Amana, IA.

Specialist from Iowa State University Extension and the Natural Resource Conservation Service will be on hand to provide information on:

- Low cost ideas for control-

ling runoff from open lot beef feedlots

- The when, what, why, and how of testing and applying manure
- Developing simple nutrient budgets and the impact feeding distillers grains can have on manure composition

“If you are a livestock producer or utilize livestock manure in your operation you should plan

to attend this event. There are some relatively simple strategies that producers can implement that can not only improve water quality but also profitability,” says Aaron Pickens, project coordinator.

A free chili supper will be provided.

For more information please contact Pickens at 319-668-2359 or Denise Schwab, ISU extension livestock specialist at 319-642-5504



Ernie (center) and Gary Zaugg (right) are presented award for their conservation efforts at SWCD annual banquet. Presenting the award to the Zauggs is Aaron Pickens, Price Creek Watershed project coordinator.

Zaugg’s Receive Recognition for Exceptional Conservation

Ernie and Gary Zaugg were recently recognized by the Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) for there exceptional conservation efforts. The award was presented to the Zauggs in the landowner-tenant division at the 2007 annual Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation District awards banquet.

Ernie owns approximately 230 acres in Washington township in Iowa County which is located in the Price Creek watershed. The farm is operated by their son, Gary, who farms approxi-

mately 400 acres in Iowa and Benton counties.

The Zauggs have taken steps to reduce soil erosion, improve wildlife habitat, and protect water quality in Price Creek on the row crop farm by actively utilizing no-till and contour farming as well as rotating for-ages on the more critical areas. Through the Environmental Quality Incentives Cost Share Program, Ernie completed a grade stabilization structure , commonly called a pond, in 2005. Ernie also applied or plans to apply over 3 acres of

grassed waterways as well as multiple water and sediment control basins and terraces to control erosion.

Additionally, Ernie was one of the first to sign on with the Price Creek Watershed Project which started early this year.

It is committed landowners and farm operators like Ernie and Gary who truly do make a difference!

Impact of Heavy Spring Rains Felt This Fall

“Fields that were heavily tilled and had little residue experienced severe erosion compared to those that were no-tilled”

The heavy rains experienced back in May have impacted several farms in the area, especially those that had been tilled.

Steve Johnston, District Conservationist in Iowa County said that one common theme was obvious this spring, “Fields that were heavily tilled and had little residue experienced severe erosion compared to those that were no-tilled,” he said.

Johnston is urging producers to

take note of any problem areas during or after harvest. “As farmers are in the field this fall, they are getting a good look at their land and seeing areas that may have been effected by this springs heavy rains,” he said.

Johnston says to especially look for areas where small gullies have formed. “These would be areas where conservation practices may be needed to prevent erosion in the future,” he ex-

plained.

Producers in the Price Creek watershed may be eligible for up to 75% cost share to install grassed waterways, water and sediment control basins, terraces, and other water and erosion control measures.

Contact your local soil and water conservation district for more information.

Contact Information

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Funding for this project has been provided by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under the Federal Nonpoint Source Management Program (Section 319 of the Clean Water Act), The Iowa Department of Agriculture’s Water Protection and Watershed Protection Funds, and the Iowa Watershed Improvement Fund administered by the Iowa Watershed Improvement Review Board. Technical Assistance is being provided by the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service.

State Loans and Cost Share –A Winning Combination for Smaller Open Feedlots

Small open feedlots may find a winning combination this fall if they want to improve their open feedlot by moving all or part of it under a roof.

“For the first time, we’ll be able to offer a low interest loan to producers who want to replace all or part of their open feedlot with a deep bedded confinement,” said Patti Cale-Finnegan, the DNR’s loan coordinator.

Loans are available for the buildings because they confine animals and manure, preventing runoff or discharge of the manure. Projects that will benefit Iowa’s water quality and

environment are eligible.

Funding can be used for deep bedded buildings that:

1. Replace or cover an existing feedlot, or
2. Expand a facility as an addition to an existing open feedlot, provided the open feedlot remains in compliance with all environmental rules.

“Currently \$75-\$150 per animal unit is available as cost share assistance through the federal EQIP cost share program. Eligible landowners in the Price

Creek watershed can receive up to an additional \$75 per animal unit to install a roofed structure,” explains Aaron Pickens, Price Creek Watershed Project coordinator.

Price Creek watershed has over twenty open feedlots. Many of which are in close proximity to the creek or one of its tributaries.

Producers may apply for loans through many local lenders. For more information contact Pickens at 319-668-2359 or your local soil and water conservation district office.



A hoop building is one of many options available for controlling manure and runoff from open feedlots. Cost share assistance and loan programs are available to assist landowners in implementing manure and runoff control practices

Buffers, Filter Strips Offer Competitive Yearly Payment

Filter strips and quail buffers are offered through the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

A recent increase in rental rates have made these practices even more attractive to area producers.

“Annual rental rates are determined by the soil types within the area selected for enrollment in the program,” explains Quenten Offerman, Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation District Technician. “The soil rental rates in Iowa and Benton County have increased by approximately 20%. Many con-

tracts have received a rental rate of \$170-\$225 per acre.”

Producers receive an annual payment on the acres enrolled for the duration of the contract which can be 10-15 years. Additionally, there may be up to 90% cost share available to help pay for seeding, and needed ground preparation.

“The purpose of buffers is to restore wildlife habitat along streams, ponds, and field borders. Buffers also filter sediment, nutrients, and other contaminants from runoff, improving water quality,” says Offerman.

Areas eligible for these buffers include agriculture land that has been farmed at least four of six years between 1996 and 2002.

Filter strips are located along streams and quail buffers are placed around field borders. Both practices can range from 30 to 120 feet in width.

If you would like to enroll some of your land into the CRP Buffer program or would just like to learn more, contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District.

“The soil rental rates in Iowa and Benton counties have increased by 20%. Many contracts have received a rental rate of \$175-\$225 per acre.”



Before (left photo) and after (right photo) of a filter strip that was installed in Lenox township in Iowa County. The filter strip was enrolled in the CRP program in 2003 and as can be seen by the photos, has resulted in a dramatic improvement in the health of the stream.